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ZOOM

IN ON THE USA

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BUILDING NEW HOMES FAR FROM HOME...

Winter was coming. The temperatures dropped. Food was scarce and so was shelter. The first English settlers in Massachusetts Bay had to learn how to build their homes from scratch. They shoveled dugouts in hillsides and built wigwams to ensure protection against the elements. None of these first primitive dwellings survive to our times.

Later, when the settlers were better off, they started building cottages as they knew back in England, with thatched roofs and spaces in the wooden frame filled with plaster. These houses proved inadequate, too fragile for New England weather.

In the second half of the 17th century the colonists developed an improved design, a house derived from

the English traditions but adapted to the climate. On the outside, the upper floor projected beyond the lower floor, while inside there was a large stone fireplace able to warm the interior. Frequently, an addition was built on one side or at the rear and would house a kitchen with pantries or bedrooms.

Dutch traditions were a bit different, and so were Spanish, and Swedish, and ... many others.

In this issue of *Zoom* we look at how different national traditions of home building developed in the New World, changing and adapting to American weather and soil and deriving from the wisdom of native inhabitants to build the most essential abode for each man: their own home.



Edward Hopper's "The Mansard Roof," part of an exhibit Edward Hopper - The Watercolors, at Washington's National Museum of American Art, Photo © AP Images

ADOBE IN CONSTRUCTION



(clockwise from the photo above) Ancient cliff dwellings at Canyon de Chelly National Monument, Arizona; Tourists visit Taos Pueblo, New Mexico; The stamp shows a replica of the church at San Gabriel, located in present day Espanola, New Mexico; The Martinez family's home, which was built by ABC's television show "Extreme Makeover: Home Edition" in Albuquerque's Trumbull Village neighborhood. All Photos © AP Images



One of the Oldest & Lasting Materials

Adobe is a material used in the construction of homes. It is made from clay, straw, sand and water which are mixed and baked to form hard bricks. Thanks to availability of the ingredients, cheapness and durability, it has been known and used for centuries on end, and is one of the oldest building materials in the world. Taos Pueblo in New Mexico (see the photo in the top right-hand corner) is over 1000 years old and is still inhabited today. A World Heritage Site visited by hundreds of thousands of tourists each year, today it is home to over 190 dwellers who live there permanently.

Accommodation for Many Families

In America, Indians built pueblos (Spanish for villages) using adobe as construction material. Located at first in hard to reach areas for safety reasons (see a spectacular ancient cliff dwelling in the wall of Canyon de Chelly in the photo above), the adobe pueblos were laid out in the shape of a letter D or E, and had several stories. Numerous rooms could house well over a thousand people. Their inner part often enclosed a courtyard.

The Spanish Contribution

These enclosed patios, alongside porches held up with posts called zapatas, heavy wooden doors and elaborate corbels are the Spanish contributions to adobes (shortened name for an adobe house). It was indeed

the Spanish who introduced wooden molds into the production of adobe bricks. Before, adobe had just been spread in layers and left to dry.

House that Guarantees Thermal Comfort

Apart from their color, shape and eye pleasing natural charm, adobe houses are ideal for the hot and dry climate of the southwestern states. The thick walls absorb the heat of the day which warms the rooms during the night. The interior retains a relatively constant temperature, even when there are huge variations of temperatures outside reaching forty degrees Fahrenheit or more. Adobe houses are said to be "cooler in summer and warmer in winter."

For Every Pocket

With the new interest in green building, adobe has been making a successful comeback into the building industry, especially in such states as New Mexico, Arizona and California. Houses can be cheap, especially if owner-built, but they can also be very costly, and combine the natural material with ultra modern technologies of solar aperture, energy saving window units, not to mention artistic and handmade interior décor including for example hand-carved entry doors, lintels, corbels, or the adobe hand-shaped nichos (niches) or bancos (benches).

Text by AIRC Krakow

ARCHITECTURAL STYLES IN BRIEF

The so called **Colonial** style of the mid-17th c. reveals English, Dutch and Spanish influences. The English colonists were fond of building their homes in rows and subscribed to the requirements of the renaissance symmetry. The Dutch characteristic was a gambrel roof, while the Spanish preferred flat roofs and used the locally known adobe in the construction of homes. The 18th and 19th century witnessed three prevalent styles, which have been termed **Early National**, **Romantic**, and **Victorian**. The **Early National** style includes the **Federalist** style which made frequent use of small windows above the doors, called fanlights, and followed a 16th century Italian architect Andrea Palladio, especially in his classic design of windows. The **Greek Revival** style also falls in the Early National, and, as the name suggests, is reminiscent of Greek classicist architecture with its fondness of columns and temple fronts. The **Romantic** period, popular in the second half of the 19th century consists of **Gothic Revival** style, characterized by pointed arches, finials,

and battlements, and the **Italianate**, with tall windows and very decorative cornices. The **Victorian** style, also popular in the second half of the 19th century, cherished round shapes, gables, and rich, impressive masonry. The turn of the 20th century introduced the **Prairie** type as well as **International**, **Art Moderne** and **Art Deco** styles with their futuristic and geometric designs, and simple and elegant facades. A very interesting period was the years around 1910 - 1945 which brought about the revival of many older historical periods. These Revival styles included: the **Colonial**, **Dutch**, **Tudor**, **Neoclassical**, **Spanish**, **Mission**, **Beaux Arts** and **Italian Renaissance**. The post-war period got rid of ornaments and stylistic forms. It valued functionality and ignored history. The **Modern** style, as it was called, was followed by the **Postmodern**, which we witness nowadays. As a reaction to modern, it returns to history, but mixes historical styles in its own combinations. Eclecticism and simplification are characteristics of this style.



(clockwise from the top left photo:) The Sarah Kendall House in Newport, Rhode Island, built in 1871, is one of the state's many historic Colonial homes; a small rock farmhouse built in 1700 in Pasadena, Maryland; "Hatfield House" in Philadelphia's Fairmount park is shown in this November 20, 2005 photo; The Sedgely Porter's House, designed by Benjamin Henry Latrobe, who would later design the U.S. Capitol, is seen in Philadelphia's Fairmount Park on November 20, 2005; Children from a tour group stream from the small house where President Andrew Johnson was born in Raleigh, North Carolina. The house now sits on the grounds at the Morehead Historic Park in Raleigh

All Photos © AP Images

ACTIVITY PAGE

Win a Prize!
September 2009 CONTEST



Home & house ... What is the difference between these two words?

Send the answer (with your home address) to: madridirc@state.gov

Deadline: October 31

Win a Prize!

The answer in the July-August contest was: "13 states"

Thank you for participating

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Exercise 1

Here are some idioms with the word "home". Match the meanings below with the idiomatic expressions:

- a) bring home the bacon,
- b) chickens come home to roost,
- c) eat someone out of house and home,
- d) make oneself at home,
- e) do one's homework,
- f) nobody home,
- g) nothing to write home about.

- 1. nothing special or remarkable
- 2. the person who did something wrong will always be caught up by the consequences
- 3. be well prepared
- 4. earn a living, manage financially
- 5. a/ a mentally impaired person
b/ no one is paying attention
- 6. eat so much that there are no resources left
- 7. (often said to a guest:) feel and act as if in one's own home

Exercise 2 Topics for discussion:

- 1. George Washington said: *I had rather be on my farm than be emperor of the world.*

There are a lot of famous quotes and sayings about home that have set in for good in all languages. Some other sayings and phrases often used in English include:

- *home, sweet home,*
- *there's no place like home,*
- *homeward bound,*
- *feel homesick.*

Work with another student and try to find equivalents to the English phrases above in your own language. Can you think of some other sayings, quotes, and phrases?

- 2. Have you ever changed houses? If yes, what can you remember about your old home? How does it compare with your new one? Tell the other student about your old home. If you have never moved, think of the reasons why people are so sentimental about their homes from the past.

Glossary

(in the order of appearance)

from scratch - from the very beginning
dugout - a shelter dug in the ground
thatched - (of a roof) covered with straw, reeds or other such material
project - extend outward
pantry - a small room in which food is kept
derive - originate
patio - a paved outdoor area adjoining a house
porch - a covered shelter projecting in front of the entrance of a building
corbel - a projection jutting out from a wall to support a structure above it
mold - a hollow container used to give shape to molten material
lintel - a horizontal support across the top of a door or window
gambrel - a roof with two sides, each of which has a shallower slope above a steeper one
prevalent - predominant, powerful
finial - an ornament at the apex of a roof
battlement - a parapet at the top of a wall with regularly spaced, squared openings for shooting
cornice - an ornamental molding around the wall of a room just below the ceiling
gable - the part of a wall which has the end of a pitched roof
(from *The New Oxford American Dictionary*)



This is an interior view of the dining area at the Col. Joshua Harnden Tavern historical site in Wilmington, Massachusetts. The 200-year-old structure, which has served as farmhouse, tavern and a stop on the underground railroad, was saved by the community when it was scheduled to be leveled and replaced with an office building in 1971. Photo © AP Images